

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02

L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 IO-03 SAM-01 EB-03 ACDA-10

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R 201300Z JUL 76  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3563  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
CINSUSNAVEUR  
COMSIXTHFLT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 5100

LIMDIS

CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMSIXTHFLT ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR OLOS ENRG TS LY

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA ON LIBYAN-TUNISIAN  
RELATIONS AND BUTTES RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL INC.

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA CALLED ME IN TO  
EXPRESS HIS UNHAPPINESS WITH BUTTES' DELAY IN STARTING  
DRILLING OPERATIONS IN THE DISPUTED AREA OF THE CONTINENTAL  
SHELF, SUSPECTING BUTTES WAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE USG OR  
"FRENCH INTERESTS." I GAVE HIM A FRANK EXPOSITION OF U.S.  
POLICY AND RECOUNTED OUR DEALINGS WITH BUTTES. NOUIRA THEN  
LAUNCHED INTO A DENUNCIATION OF LIBYAN BEHAVIOR, RECOUNTED  
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GOT'S LATEST REBUFF FROM QADHAFI, PREDICTED A NEW OUTRAGE

BY QADHAFI FOR AUGUST 1 AUD SOUGHT REASURANCE THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT ABANDON TUNISIA IN FACE OF A LIBYAN THREAT.

END SUMMARY

2. THE PRIME MINISTER INVITED ME TO HIS OFFICE JULY 19 WHERE WE SPOKE FOR AN HOUR IN THE PRESENCE OF TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, ALI HEDDA AND CHEF DE CABINET HAMED ABED. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES AND MY EXPRESSION OF THANKS TO HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT FOR THE COURTESIES EXTENDED TO SENATOR PERCY ON HIS RECENT VISIT, THE PRIME MINISTER INDICATED THAT HE HAD ASKED ME TO COME IN ON A "SOMEWHAT DELICATE MATTER."

3. BUTTES PROBLEMS: NOUIRA SAID THAT HE WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S ARRANGEMENTS WITH BUTTES RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL INC. HE SAID THAT IN RECENT CONVERDATIONS WITH TAP BUTTES HAD GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM UNDISCLOSED SOURCES NOT TO PROCEED WITH THE DRILLING IN THE DISPUTED ZONE OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF BETWEEN LIBYA AND TUNISIA. THE GOT WAS SPECULATING WHETHER THE PRESSURE WAS BEING APPLIED BY THE USG OR "CERTAIN FRENCH INTERESTS." HE WONDERED WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE USG WAS IN THE MATTER. I RECOUNTED FOR HIM THE HISTORY OF OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH BUTTES AND FRANKLY STATED THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD CAREFULLY EXAMINED WITH BUTTES' REPRESENTATIVES THE MAPS AFFECTING THE AREA WHERE DRILLING WAS CONTEMPLATED. OFFICERS IN THE DEPARTMENT HAD CONCLUDED AND HAD INFORMED BUTTES THAT U.S. PRACTICE IN PRECEDENT CASES HAD BEEN TO ADVISE THE AMERICAN OIL COMPANY CONCERNED NOT TO DRILL UNTIL THE TWO DISPUTING PARTIES HAD RESOLVED THEIR DIFFERENCES. THE OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT WHO SPOKE WITH BUTTES, I SAID, WOULD HAVE BEEN REMISS IN THEIR DUTY HAD THEY NOT CAUTIONED THE COMPANY REGARDING U.S. POLICY AND THE CONSEQUENT INABILITY OF THE USG TO AFFORD PROTECTION TO AMERICAN CITIZENS INVOLVED. IT WAS MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, TO THE BUTTES REPRESENTATIVES THAT THE DECISION TO DRILL OR NOT DRILL WAS THEIR OWN IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS. I ADDED THAT IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE OWNERS OF THE ODECO DRILLING RIG IN QUESTION, NOW FINISHING ITS WORK IN THE GULF OF HAMMAMET, HAD REFUSED TO ALLOW THEIR EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE DIS-

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PUTED ZONE BECAUSE OF INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS. BY COINCIDENCE, I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER, PRESIDENT BASSINGER OF BUTTES HAD COME TO SEE ME ON JULY 19 BEFORE I KNEW WHAT SUBJECT THE PRIME MINISTER INTENDED TO RAISE WITH ME. I HAD REVIEWED THE USG POSITION WITH BASSINGER, WHO CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD IT, BUT WHO INDICATED THAT BUTTES WAS ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF ARRANGING FOR A REPLACEMENT DRILLING RIG TO BE BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE NORTH SEA. I WAS LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT BUTTES HAD

PRETTY WELL DECIDED TO GO AHEAD WITH THE DRILLING OPERATION DESPITE THE KNOWN RISKS. HE ASKED ME IF I HAD ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT FRENCH PRESSURE WAS BEING APPLIED TO ODECO. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NO INDICATION OF IT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

4. NO ARBITRATING PLANS: THE PRIME MINISTER THANKED ME FOR THIS FRANK EXPOSITION OF THE U.S. POSITION AND THEN PROCEEDED TO REVIEW THE TUNISIAN CASE, STRESSING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS IN NO DOUBT OF THE LEGALITY OF ITS POSITION. I ASKED WHETHER TUNISIA INTENDED TO SEEK A DECISION ON THE DISPUTE FROM THE ICJ. THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT ANSWER ME DIRECTLY, BUT STATED THAT ALL DEALINGS WITH THE LIBYANS HAD BEEN SO FUTILE THAT HE DOUBTED WHETHER ANYTHING WOULD COME OUT OF SUCH A REQUEST TO THE ICJ. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO REVIEW FOR ME HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIBYAN ATTITUDE ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF. WHEN HE FINISHED I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THIS CONFIRMED MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF THE SUBJECT. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE, NEVERTHELESS, THAT A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM WOULD SOON BE FOUND.

5. LIBYAN BUILDUP: NEXT, NOUIRA REVERTED TO HIS OBSESSION WITH THE UNPREDICTABLE COLONEL QADHAFI. HE SAID THAT THE LARG IS CONTINUING TO BUILD UP THE ELEVENTH JUNE BASE AND ARMAMENTS JUST OVER THE TUNISIAN BORDER. LIBYAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT FREQUENTLY VIOLATE TUNISIAN AIR SPACE. MOST RECENTLY THEY DID SO ON JULY 6, COMING ALMOST AS FAR AS TUNIS. MONITORING CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE LIBYAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND TRIPOLI, THE TUNISIANS WERE CONVINCED THAT THE PLANES WERE FLOWN BY PAKISTANI PILOTS. TUNISIA WAS POWERLESS TO COUNTER THESE VIOLATIONS. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT I WAS HAPPY THAT WE HAD VIRTUALLY ARRIVED AT A CONCLUSION OF OUR DISCUSSION REGARDING ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSE IN THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THAT, BEFORE MANY MONTHS HAD PASSED TUNISIA WOULD HAVE A  
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CREDIBLE ANTI-AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY.

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L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 EB-03 IO-03 ACDA-10 SAM-01

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R 201300Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3564

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 5100

LIMDIS

CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMSIXTHFLT ALSO FOR POLADS

6. U.S. BACKING: THE DISCUSSION THEN TURNED TOWARD THE WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES QADHAFI HAS FOR HIS NEXT TROUBLE-MAKING VENTURE. I SAID THAT QADHAFI'S PRIOR RECORD OF SUCCESS IN EVERYTHING HE HAS TRIED LATELY LEFT ROOM FOR HOPE THAT THE NEXT ONE, WHATEVER IT WOULD BE, WOULD ALSO FAIL. NOUIRA THEN ASKED WHETHER, IF QADHAFI MOVED AGAINST TUNISIA, THE U.S. WOULD COME TO TUNISIA'S AID. I REPLIED THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF A FORMAL ALLIANCE OR TREATY, AS HE KNEW, NO ONE HAD THE AUTHORITY TO GUARANTEE THAT THE U.S. WOULD HELP, BUT I MENTIONED THE RECENT UGANDAN THREATS AGAINST KENYA, A COUNTRY WHERE WE HAVE RELATIVELY MINOR STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS, BUT WHERE THE U.S. HAD JUST SENT A SQUADRON OF SHIPS AND HAD MADE OBSERVATION PLANES AVAILABLE TO THE GOK FOR FRONTIER PATROLS.

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I SAID THAT IN MY PERSONAL OPINION WE WOULD PROBABLY NOT DO LESS FOR TUNISIA. AT THIS POINT AMBASSADOR HEDDA RECALLED SECRETARY KISSINGER'S ASSURANCES TO HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR. AT LUNCH IN WASHINGTON RECENTLY INDICATING THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT TOLERATE THREATS TO TUNISIA'S SOVEREIGNTY. I SAID THAT I KNEW SECRETARY KISSINGER SPOKE WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION WOULD BE OUTRAGED BY ANY THREAT TO TUNISIA AND, LIKE THE SECRETARY, I FELT SURE

THAT WE COULD BE COUNTED ON TO HELP AS MUCH AS CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME WOULD PERMIT. NOUIRA INDICATED HIS APPRECIATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL RESTRAINTS UPON US, BUT SEEMED HAPPY WITH A REITERATION OF OUR DESIRE TO HELP AND DID NOT PRESS THE ISSUE FURTHER. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN SAID THAT HE WANTED TO TELL ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT TUNISIAN INTELLIGENCE BELIEVES QADHAFI HAD SET THE DATE OF AUGUST 1 FOR LAUNCHING WHATEVER HIS NEXT OUTRAGE WILL BE. I SAID I FELT THAT WE SHOULD KEEP EACH OTHER INFORMED OF ANY USEFUL INFORMATION OF THIS NATURE AS MAY COME TO EITHER GOVERNMENT. HE AGREED TO PASS ON ANYTHING MORE DEFINITE THAT HE RECEIVES. I ASSURED HIM I WOULD DO THE SAME.

7. NEW LIBYAN REBUFF: I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE PAPERS HAD REPORTED TWO CALLS ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA BY THE LIBYAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN TUNISIA (ZENTANI) IN THE PAST TEN DAYS. NOUIRA SAID THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE CONFIDENTIAL, BUT HE SAW NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT KNOW OF THEIR CONTENT. BOURGUIBA HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE FOR A NEW EXCHANGE WHEN TUNISIA'S MOST RECENT OFFER TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES AND RETURN HOSTAGES HAD GONE ONE MONTH WITHOUT RESPONSE. HE TOLD ZENOANI THAT TUNISIA HAD NO WISH TO CONTINUE THESE STRAINED RELATIONS AND WANTED TO MEND THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE ASKED IF THE LARG WOULD NOT NOW REPLY. SEVERAL DAYS LATER ZENTANI RETURNED WITH A MESSAGE FROM QADHAFI SAYING THAT THE STRAINED RELATIONS WERE ENTIRELY TUNISIA'S FAULT, THAT LIBYA HAD NOTHING FURTHER TO SAY AND THAT IF TUNISIA WANTED TO RESUME THE PROPAGANDA WAR AND OTHER THREATS AGAINST LIBYA, TUNISIA WOULD HAVE TO PREPARE TO TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES.

8. BUTTES AGAIN: WHEN THE FOREGOING WAS IN DRAFT WE LEARNED THAT ETAP IS CONSIDERING TAKING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST BUTTES/ODECO FOR FAILURE TO PERFORM ON THEIR  
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CONTRACT. THIS WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE MESSAGE.

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## Message Attributes

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